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Note verbale dated 18 November 1996 from the Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation addressed to the Secretary-General

The Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the United Nations presents its compliments to the Secretary-General of the United Nations and has the honour to inform him that, on 16 November 1996, at 2348 hours, the space object Mars-96 was launched from the Baikonur launch site by the Proton space launch vehicle complex, with an additional carrier rocket stage (booster rocket), into an interim Earth orbit.

With the first ignition of the propulsion system of the booster rocket, the space object Mars-96 was launched as scheduled into a datum circular orbit, on the first orbit of which a second ignition of the booster rocket was to have taken place to move the space object into a flight trajectory towards Mars. However, on the second ignition of the engine the required booster impulse did not take place and, as a result, the booster rocket and the space object remained in Earth orbit.

According to the calculations of the Russian ballistic centres, at approximately 0400-0500 hours Moscow time on 17 November 1996, the space object Mars-96 re-entered the dense layers of the Earth's atmosphere and, having disintegrated, ceased to exist, falling into the waters of the Pacific Ocean.

According to the observations of the outer space monitoring system, the booster rocket re-entered the Earth's atmosphere on 18 November 1996 and at 0415-0420 hours ceased to exist, falling into the Pacific Ocean in the area of eastern Australia.

As was reported earlier, the radionuclide energy sources based on plutonium-238 which were on board the space object Mars-96 will not disintegrate in any unforeseen circumstances.

The Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the United Nations takes this opportunity to convey to the Secretary-General of the United Nations the renewed assurances of its highest consideration.

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